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AUTHOR Hammond, John; Gilbert, Keith
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ABSTRACT

Developments in the New South Wales (Australia) secondary school curriculum have led to a number of former home economics teachers being allocated to teach in the area of Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE). The New South Wales Department of School Education in conjunction with the University of New England (New South Wales, Australia) has commenced a reskilling program for former home economics teachers who wish to complement their teaching skills with further training in physical education. The 2-year program results in the Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Physical Education). The program is delivered through correspondence and residential courses. It includes a theoretical component covering such topics as applied anatomy, exercise physiology, physical fitness, and appraisal of movement skills and a practical component covering dance, gymnastics, and game skills. This paper outlines steps in developing the program, gives a demographic profile of the teachers undertaking the program and how they are coping with the initial stages of the process, and notes program evaluation plans. Appendices list key learning areas in the New South Wales curriculum and provide demographic data about reskilling participants. (JDD)

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The Reskilling of Home Economics Teachers for Personal Development, Health and Physical Education in New South Wales Schools - a case study

Paper presented at the

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Brisbane, Queensland

by

John Hammond
Department of Science, Technology and Mathematics Education
University of New England

and

Keith Gilbert
Department of Human Movement Studies
Queensland University of Technology

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ABSTRACT :
Developments over the last few years in the New South Wales secondary school curriculum have led to a number of former Home Economics teachers being allocated to teach in the 'Key Learning Area' of Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE). This was largely due to the Home Economics subject being split and redefined in the changes to the school curriculum, ie. moving to either PDHPE or to the Design and Technology area. Despite having the appropriate experience and qualifications for the teaching of Health and Personal Development, these teachers have found it increasingly difficult to teach across the whole spectrum of PDHPE, a consequence of their lack of training in Physical Education. The NSW Department of School Education in conjunction with the University of New England have commenced a re-skilling program for former Home Economics teachers who wish to complement their teaching skills with further training in Physical Education. This paper describes that re-skilling program and how it articulates with formal awards at the University of New England. It also gives a demographic profile of the teachers undertaking the program and how they are coping with the initial stages of the process. To explain the experience of conducting the program the paper takes a case study approach, describing the process and making recommendations for future assessment of the program, revealing its effect on the teacher's skills.

INTRODUCTION

School curriculum in New South Wales has undergone an extensive overhaul over the last few years. Reorganisation of the curriculum led to the development of school subjects into what are now known as Key Learning Areas. There have been 6 Key Learning Areas established for primary schools (K-6) and 8 Key Learning Areas for secondary schools (7-12), Appendix 1 lists these. It is because of these developments that the roles of both Health and Physical Education teachers and Home Economics teachers have been redefined. The latter in a more drastic way than the former. Re-allocation of content areas within the former subjects of Home Science saw the subject split to either Technology and Applied Studies or to Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE). In both of the new Key Learning Areas, an integrative approach to the sub-disciplines has been prescribed. The implications for teachers already employed in the system are wide ranging, as are the implications for pre-service teacher training and teacher upgrading.

The PDHPE Key Learning Area has emerged to encompass the teaching of the traditional Physical Education area, which has for some time been associated with Health Education. These subjects have now been merged with the teaching of Personal Development, to form

the new Key Learning Area. For Health and Physical Education teachers, the changes required are more to do with : a philosophy of approach, programming, strategies for teaching and learning, and the evaluation process; than changes to the content. The vast majority of Health and Physical Education teachers have welcomed the changes in the curriculum, seeing a great opportunity to endorse the status of their discipline within the education system. The new Key Learning Area, to a certain extent, matches the suggested National Curriculum Profile and Statement for Health and Physical Education (Australian Education Council 1993a; Australian Education Council 1993b).

Home Economics as a subject area has been abolished in New South Wales schools. In the main, content previously covered in this subject area has been shifted to Technology and Applied Studies (eg. textiles) or to PDHPE (eg. nutrition). There are some HSC subjects which are more appropriately taught by Home Economics trained teachers, such as Life Management or Food Technology. The former subject being placed in the PDHPE Key Learning Area, the latter in the Technology and Applies Studies Key Learning Area. Existing promotional positions have been redesignated, staff have been transferred or plans are under way to phase out some positions over the next few years. Therefore, since the introduction of the new Key Learning Areas, teachers of Home Economics have had to reassess their role. (Hammond, 1993).

The New South Wales Department of School Education has encouraged teachers to fit within one Key Learning Area, although in practice this has been difficult in some schools. Home Economics teachers have largely chosen the Technology and Applied Studies Key Learning Area for continuation of their teaching. An alternative for Home Economics teachers with an interest in personal development or health issues, is to move into the teaching of PDHPE. However, a lack of background in the teaching of Physical Education has been a major disadvantage for most. There has been some resistance from Health and Physical Education teachers to Home Economics teachers joining the former Physical Education faculty. Schools have tried to accommodate teachers by timetabling on a shared-teacher model (Board of Studies, 1991b), utilising the Physical Education teacher in the practical setting and the Home Economics teacher in the classroom. However, this only provides a short term solution. In the long term, the division of Personal Development and Health from Physical Education, would only serve to perpetuate the status quo and contradict the concept of an integrated Key Learning Area in PDHPE. The reskilling of a Home Economics teacher for PDHPE is a more extensive process than it would be for Technology and Applied Studies. The NSW Department of School Education in conjunction with the University of New England have commenced a re-skilling program for former Home Economics teachers who wish to complement their teaching skills with further training in Physical Education.

THE RESKILLING PROGRAM

The New South Wales Department of School Education embarked on a comprehensive professional development scheme, in order that teachers are properly able to cope with the extensive changes in their schools. Examples of two programs within that scheme, which have relevance for this paper, are the Design and Technology Teacher Development Program (NSW Department of School Education, et al. 1992) and the PDHPE Secondary Teacher Development Program (Moore and Moloney, 1993). The former for teachers moving into Technology and Applied Studies and the latter for teachers of PDHPE. Both programs have had a centrally organised **"Train-the-Trainers"** course for selected teachers to return to their regions and conduct locally organised courses. Both programs have been written and implemented with input from universities and have been given credit for units within Bachelor of Education (upgrading to 4-year-trained) and appropriate coursework at Masters level.

A sub-set of the teachers targeted for the PDHPE Secondary Teacher Development Program, were the Home Economics teachers who were keen to further develop their skills in teaching within the PDHPE Key Learning Area. Therefore, a specific reskilling program was proposed and implemented to meet the needs of that particular group. This section describes that reskilling program and how it articulates with formal awards at the University of New England. It also gives a demographic profile of the teachers undertaking the program and how they are coping with the initial stages of the process. To explain the experience of conducting the program the paper takes a case study approach, describing the process and making recommendations for future assessment of the program and its effect on the teacher's skills.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The New South Wales Department of School Education identified 12 teachers throughout the state who were : Home Economics trained; teaching in the PDHPE Key Learning Area; and willing to undertake a fairly extensive reskilling program. Essentially the group was made up of seven teachers currently holding a Bachelor of Education degree and five who were regarded as 3-year trained (equivalent of Diploma of Teaching). There was a wide range in years of experience since graduating, with the first to qualify as a teacher in 1969 and the latest 1989. During their formal training : all 12 reported the study of nutrition; 10 reported studies associated with health and/or personal development; 7 taking units in biological sciences; and only 3 reporting formal study of physical education. In terms of relevant experience, professional development and other qualifications : 11 of the group reported coaching or officiating experience in a range of 21 sports and physical

activities; only 4 having gained accreditation certificates across 8 sports - slightly more than the incidence of sports accreditation among NSW high school teachers (Rockwell 1993); 8 were qualified in the area of First Aid, resuscitation or lifesaving; 3 had completed some sort of professional in-service in PDHPE (other than those formerly categorised); and only 1 had completed their Austswim Teacher of Swimming Award. Profiles of this group of teachers, in terms of relevant training, professional development and experience can be seen graphically presented in Appendix 2.

STEPS IN DEVELOPING THE PROGRAM

- There was a meeting called by the NSW Department of School Education (DSE) - Training and Development Directorate. Present at the meeting were 5 representatives of the DSE and representatives of 8 NSW universities offering awards in Health and Physical Education. The meeting was called for the DSE to gain advice on how to proceed with the proposed reskilling scheme, the mode of delivery, content etc. The university representatives were also advised that the project would be offered to all teacher training institutions for tender.

- Applications were called for universities to tender for the reskilling of a single group of Home Economics teachers into PDHPE. The emphasis of the required program was to be focused on physical education skills, the DSE regarding the group's skills in the other areas of teaching in PDHPE as adequate. The reskilling course was required to be in the distance education mode because of the geographical spread of the participants. The content was to be delivered as 2 related components, through correspondence and residential courses. Firstly a theoretical component covering : applied anatomy; exercise physiology; factors affecting performance; physical fitness; classification of movement skill; major factors affecting skill acquisition; elements of composition; movement composition; measuring skill; and appraisal and appreciation of movement skill. Secondly a practical component covering : dance - aerobic, creative and social; gymnastics - educational; and game skills.

- The University of New England won the tender to conduct the program, offering a DSE sponsored program in the first year of the scheme, which qualified participants to enter the Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Physical Education) with advanced standing in the second year. With advanced standing and successful completion of studies the participants would take out the award by the conclusion of the second year. The program was accepted by the DSE after a review/advisory meeting with representatives of : Training and Development Directorate; the Australian Council for Health Physical Education and Recreation; and the University of New England (UNE).

- The program is currently being conducted with 9 participants who have completed 1 residential course and 1 unit of distance education study through University Partnerships (the commercial arm of UNE, offering units of study on a full fee paying basis).

THE PROGRAM

The program consists of the following major components, with modifications made to the Graduate Diploma of Teaching (PE), that accommodated the DSE requirements :

YEAR 1

University Partnerships Units (Distance Ed.)

- Sports Coaching (Distance Ed.)
- Motor Skill Acquisition (Distance Ed.)

Certificate of Teaching Movement Activities (2 intensive residential courses)

- Soccer, Gymnastics, Tennis, Dance, Austswim, Cricket.

YEAR 2

Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Physical Education)

- Health Promotion in Schools and the Community (Distance Ed.)
- Individual Project in Physical Education (Intensive residential) : Basketball, Athletics, Softball and Volleyball

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the program of reskilling is presently only one quarter of the way to completion. Evidence for its success or otherwise is limited to anecdotal feedback directly from participants or indirectly from DSE personnel. The feedback is currently favourable, from the comments made to staff involved in the program and to the coordinator from the DSE. All participants have successfully completed the first residential course and although physically drained, they reported considerable gains from the instruction in the teaching of movement activities. They have been successful in passing distance education assessment requirements and initial feedback on the content has been favourable.

Besides assessment of the students in their studies, the evaluation process should consider the effectiveness the program has on the teaching skills of the participants. This will be undertaken by a longitudinal study which utilises both qualitative and quantitative research

strategies, comparing the reskilled teachers with new physical education teachers, who graduate and commence teaching coinciding with conclusion of this program. In addition a comparison will be made with physical education teachers already in the system who are matched for years of teaching, type of school, promotional status etc., in order to further compare the group for teaching effectiveness.

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APPENDIX 1

Key Learning Areas in the New South Wales School Curriculum
(modified from - Board of Studies, 1991a)

Primary	Secondary
Mathematics	Mathematics
Science and Technology	Science
English	English
Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE)	Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) [1]
Human Society and its Environment	Human Society and its Environment
Creative and Practical Arts	Creative Arts
	Technology and Applied Studies
	Languages Other than English

[1] PDHPE (the main focus of this paper) in the secondary school has a mandatory syllabus for years 7-10 . In the senior school, students are required to undertake a mandatory 25 hour Health and Personal Development course which does not contribute to their HSC score and other offerings within the Key Learning Area which do contribute to HSC may be selected (Board of Studies, 1992).

APPENDIX 2

Profiles of relevant formal studies, professional development and experience of the Home Economics teachers targeted for reskilling in PDHPE.